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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 36 SEPT. 19, 2005 SPECIAL ISSUE

INSIDE

18,000 Boeing workers strike against concessions

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Gulf social disaster: twin capitalist parties at fault, workers need labor party based on fighting unions

The following statement was issued September 7 by the Socialist Workers 2005 National Campaign.

The social catastrophe in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is an indictment of the capitalist two-party system in the United States through which a handful of billionaire families maintains its political power and its wealth.

SOCIALIST WORKERS 2005 CAMPAIGN

The deadly lack of preparedness for the crisis unfolding across the Gulf Coast and the brutal and belated government response provide further evidence of whose class interests are represented by politicians at the federal, state, and local level. Without exception—whether the Republican White House and bipartisan Congress, Louisiana's Democratic party governor and New Orleans mayor, or other Democratic and Republican officials in that state, Mississippi, Alabama, and beyond—these political servants of the employing class demonstrated contempt for working people and callous disregard for their conditions and

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AP/Eric Gay

Heavily armed police SWAT team drives past working people stranded at the New Orleans Convention Center September 1 in wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Workers outraged at class-biased and racist gov't response

BY BRIAN TAYLOR AND LAURA GARZA

NEW ORLEANS, September 5—Thousands of working people headed back today to neighborhoods on the outskirts of this city. As vehicles came to a halt on the hot, traffic-jammed highway, with only several hours remaining to pick up belongings before curfew, people began talking to one another. Many of the conversations we were part of were marked by outrage at the response of federal, state, and local governments and capitalist politicians

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Cuba: 1,500 doctors stand ready to aid victims

Revolutionary gov't offers example of international solidarity

Cuban president Fidel Castro made the following remarks September 2 on that country's "Roundtable" television program. He reiterated the revolutionary government's offer to immediately send 1,100 medical personnel and material to aid victims of hurricane Katrina in the United States. Two days later the Cuban government increased its offer, organizing a brigade of 1,586 physicians, ready for immediate mobilization.

As of September 7 this offer, first announced August 30, had not been accepted or publicly acknowledged by U.S. officials (see news article on page 7). The statement was distributed by the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. The translation is by the *Militant.*

❖

Our country is ready to send tonight, in the early hours of the morning, 100 clinicians and specialists in Comprehensive General Medicine, who at dawn tomorrow, Saturday, could be at the Houston International Airport, Texas, the closest [major airport] to the region struck by the tragedy, in order to be transported by air, river, or land to locations isolated from shelters, facilities, and neighborhoods of the city of New Orleans where people and families requiring emergency medical care or first aid may be found.

This Cuban personnel would be carrying backpacks with 24 kilograms of medicine known to be essential in such situations to save lives, as well as basic diagnostic kits. They would be prepared to work alone or in groups of

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Labor Day actions boost solidarity for airline strikers

BY JACOB PERASSO AND MARSHALL LAMBIE

DETROIT — Two hundred striking Northwest Airlines mechanics, cleaners and their supporters rallied alongside thousands of other workers and unionists in the Labor Day parade here September 5. The members of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) Local 5 marched with the United Auto Workers Local 174 contingent, which included several local members locked out since May 1 from Hercules Drawn Steel in Livonia, Michigan. The Labor Day parade went through the downtown area under the banner "Marching to protect Health Care, Pensions and Social Security."

After the parade, 150 AMFA strikers and their supporters held an im-

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Also Inside:

EU price cuts sharpen imperialist debt offensive

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The European Union has announced plans to cut the price it pays for sugar imported from semicolonial nations by 39 percent over the next five years. The move will devastate sugar production in 18 of the poorest African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.

According to the South Africa–based *Business Day,* the plan—which will be before the European Union council of ministers for approval in November—will cost these sugar-producing countries $490 million a year.

Workers in the sugar industry will be the most affected. "Their jobs are at stake," Komal Chand, leader of the union that represents 20,000 Guyanese sugar workers, told the *Financial Times.* "We feel that we have been betrayed."

At the July Group of Eight summit, leaders of the most powerful imperialist countries pompously announced plans to cancel the foreign debt owed by 18 of the world's least developed nations. Guyana, one of the 18, was to see a cut of about $9 million in annual debt service costs. The sugar price cut, however, will wipe out about $40 million a year in income from the country, outstripping any "debt relief."

Sugar production in Caribbean countries has fallen by more than 50 percent the last two decades, declining from 11 percent of world output in 1985 to 3 percent in 2003. The sugar industry, however, remains a key component of the economies of many of these countries. The state-owned Guyana Sugar Corporation maintains a network of health clinics and helps pay for drainage and irrigation projects. "If we didn't have sugar we would have flooding every year," Guyanese president Bharrat Jagdeo told the *New York Times.* Jamaica has 40,000 sugar workers, but another 200,000 jobs are related to production of this crop.

The price cut can mean the "death knell" for sugar production in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, the *Times* noted.

Among the nations most impacted in Africa are Mauritius, Malawi, Swaziland, and Mozambique.

The crisis in the sugar industry of semicolonial countries stems from the protectionist measures of the U.S. and European Union governments. These include subsidizing the production of sugar in their own countries, imposing tariffs on imports, and dumping surpluses on the world market, which contributes substantially to the depression of world sugar prices.

Despite low wages for sugar workers in the Caribbean, the cost of production there is substantially higher than the world market price. "Whereas Brazil and Australia can produce raw sugar for less than 7 U.S. cents per lb," reports the *Times*, "Guyana's most efficient factories can produce sugar at about 18 cents per lb and costs elsewhere in the Caribbean can be much higher. In some Jamaican state-owned factories, costs are as high as 40 cents per lb, about five times the world price." In the United States, government subsidies maintain sugar prices at about 21 cents a pound.

New York meat packers fight for back wages



Militant/Dan Fein

Former BMW Meats strikers Ismenia Hernández (second from left), Lucía Hernández, and Martha Fiallos (right) at August 28 UFCW picnic.

NEW YORK—Workers at BMW Meats in Farmingdale, Long Island, struck for nearly a month demanding payment of unpaid wages and the reinstatement of fired workers. The company went out of business August 23 and the workers, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 342, continue to press for what is due them.

Fifteen workers from the plant attended a picnic in Brooklyn organized by the union. "We were ripped off by the bosses. I am still owed three weeks' vacation and back pay," Ismenia Hernández told the *Militant* at the union event. Shop steward Mercy Manas noted that the bosses paid them a week's wages in cash only after they were on strike for a week.

—DAN FEIN

State gov'ts tighten border controls

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

The governors of Arizona and New Mexico declared states of emergencies in mid-August in counties that border with Mexico, claiming an increase in violence by undocumented immigrants crossing the border between the two countries. William Richardson of New Mexico and Janet Napolitano of Arizona, both Democrats, said they would use the "emergency" to spend $1.5 million to hire more local cops and expand prison facilities.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) responded August 23 announcing that it would beef up the federal cops in the region and work closely with local and state police to patrol the highways for immigrants crossing the border. Local and state cops will be authorized to arrest undocumented workers. The DHS plans to install more surveillance cameras, infrared and motion detectors, and fences along the border, and add 2,250 more prison beds to hold people awaiting deportation hearings.

Over the past decade the number of Border Patrol cops nearly tripled from 4,000 to 11,000. This year Congress is due to vote on deploying 1,000 more border patrol cops.

In April, actions organized by the rightist Minutemen Project drew a few hundred vigilantes who patrolled the Arizona-Mexico border between Naco and Douglas. The rightist groups claim the federal immigration cops aren't "doing their job."

Washington has distanced itself from these actions. "This is not the place for people to play as amateurs," Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff said.



Hurricane evacuees protest Sept. 2 as they wait to board buses headed to Houston.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Socialist Workers Party candidates respond to Gulf Coast social disaster

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON—The Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Houston, Anthony Dutrow, and his supporters have been campaigning to explain the need for a working-class alternative to the capitalist parties, a need that is highlighted by the social catastrophe unfolding in New Orleans and the surrounding region.

The SWP campaign filed September 6 to place Dutrow, a meatpacker, on the ballot. The socialist ticket in Houston includes garment worker José Aravena for controller and Amanda Ulman, a meatpacker, for City Council At-Large-1. The same day the mayor's office informed Dutrow that his name will be placed on the November ballot.

The socialists have taken their campaign to factory gates Northwest Airlines picket lines, protest actions against death penalty, and to working-class neighborhoods throughout the city. Through this campaigning they raised the required $1,250 filing fee.

The socialist candidates found a lot of interest in the campaign among working people from New Orleans, thousands of whom are being sheltered at the Astrodome.

"The social disaster in New Orleans points to the pressing need for working people to organize independently of the capitalists and their parties, the Democrats and Republicans," Aravena said while campaigning in the Sunnyside community near the Astrodome. "Those parties defend the interests of the wealthy ruling families—with the devastating consequences we have seen for the majority.

"We have to look to our own collective power and solidarity, starting with the need to organize unions and to use union power, to defend our interests. And we also need to organize in the political arena—a labor party, based on a fighting union movement."

"I like what you are saying about a public works program," Naúmah Zulu of New Orleans told Aravena. "There are a lot of us that could go to work on that right away if the government would fund it." He was referring to the socialist campaign's call for a federally funded public works program to put millions to work at union scale and to rebuild the housing, hospitals, roads, and other pressing needs.



BY SUSAN LAMONT

BIRMINGHAM—Clay Dennison, Socialist Workers candidate for City Council, visited the Jefferson County Civic Center here September 3 to speak with working people displaced by Hurricane Katrina who had made it as far as this city to find shelter. He was accompanied by Jeanne Fitzmaurice, Socialist Workers candidate for Birmingham School Board.

"We left New Orleans just in time. My family is safe, but all those other people who didn't get out—that's what messes you up," said Davey Cross, a construction worker from the Kingston District in eastern New Orleans. The authorities, he said, "had ample time to get the levees up to par since Betsy hit," referring to the last hurricane that directly hit New Orleans, in 1965.

"All that matters in this society is the bottom line. There was a problem of homelessness in New Orleans and nobody cared. A lot of people were looking for work and nobody cared. Now they're concerned? I don't buy it."

Dennison pointed to the example of how Cuba, where workers and farmers have their own government, confronted similar disastrous storms. "The government and mass organizations worked together to prepare, to make sure people, and also animals and personal possessions, were evacuated from the path of the storm beforehand. They reinforced buildings to minimize fatalities, injuries, and damage. They also rebuilt quickly to get people back to their homes and jobs."

Cross was interested to learn how the Cuban government and people responded during similar crises. "The [U.S.] government had ample time to do what the people in Cuba did," he said.

At least 35,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees from Mississippi and Louisiana are staying in Alabama.



Militant/Bill Lambert

Anthony Dutrow, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Houston, talks with Melinda Theophile September 4 outside the Astrodome in Houston.

Boeing strikers fight against concessions

BY BETSY FARLEY AND MARK DOWNS

SEATTLE—More than 18,400 workers, members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) went on strike September 2 against Boeing, the world's largest airplane manufacturer. The unionists voted by an 86 percent margin to reject the company's proposed concession demands and hit the picket lines at plants in Washington State as well as in Portland, Oregon, and Wichita, Kansas.

The company wants to eliminate retiree medical benefits for workers recalled or hired beginning in July 2006, and to sharply increase workers' payments for medical insurance. Jim Robertson, a flight line worker at the Everett, Washington, plant explained, "I pay $66 a month for family coverage right now. They wanted to raise it to $180, with a $900 deductible."

Strikers pointed out that Boeing's profits have tripled in the last three years.

"If we accept substandard conditions like this when times are good, then God help us when there's a downturn, and you know there's going to be a downturn," said Dale Conklin, a machinist with 17 years at Boeing. Conklin was among hundreds of workers on the first picket shift at midnight as workers left the Renton, Washington, facility to join the strike.

The company is also seeking to reduce jobs by forcing machine operators who used to run a single machine to operate four machines simultaneously. It proposes cutting wages for the 960 workers at the Wichita facility.

John Lentz, an electrician at the Renton plant who had been laid off for three years and just returned to work a month before the strike, said, "I guess they thought we'd be happy to take the cash bonus and accept the contract. But I can survive without a paycheck from Boeing—I did it for three years. We have to stick together." Lentz said he thought the company is hoping to divide younger and older workers.

Dockworkers from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19 joined the Machinists' picket line at the Seattle Boeing plant on September 3. One of them was ILWU member Pat O'Connor, who has also been on the picket lines of the Northwest Airlines workers—organized by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association—most days since that strike began two weeks earlier. He said solidarity with both striking unions is needed to beat back the assaults by Boeing and Northwest.

Bob Bullard, a 20-year Boeing machine repairman, agreed. "I stopped by the Northwest picket line to show support for their strike too," he said. "All unions should support this—it's everybody's fight."

Athelia Hawkins was part of a lively picket line at the Auburn, Washington, plant to support her husband, a striking IAM member. She said she was outraged by the lack of action to evacuate people from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. "I'm disgusted with the way they treat us. It just reaffirms for me that our government is not in support of working-class people.

"I want to see more people banding together like the workers are doing here and stop just accepting the injustice of the government."

2005 Socialist Workers Party election campaigns

Elections will be held in November unless otherwise indicated

City/State	Candidates	City/State	Candidates
Atlanta	James Harris, Mayor Lisa Potash, City Council president Eleanor García, City Council	New Jersey	Angela Lariscy, Governor* Michael Ortega, State Assembly District 28*
Birmingham	Clay Dennison, City Council District 8** Jeanne Fitzmaurice, School Board District 8** (Election in Birmingham to be held October 11)	New York	Martín Koppel, Mayor* Dan Fein, City Comptroller* Arrin Hawkins, Manhattan Borough President* Sarah Katz, Bronx Borough President
Boston	Margaret Trowe, Mayor Laura Garza, City Council At-Large*	Pittsburgh	Jay Ressler, Mayor* Cynthia Jaquith, City Council District 8 Ryan Scott, City Council District 12
Des Moines, Iowa	Edwin Fruit, City Council At-Large*	Philadelphia	John Staggs, City Attorney Rebecca Crysdale, City Controller
Houston	Anthony Dutrow, Mayor* José Aravena, City Controller Amanda Ulman, City Council At-Large-1	San Francisco	Romina Green, City Treasurer Laura Anderson, City Attorney Gerardo Sánchez, Assessor-Recorder
Los Angeles	Diana Newberry, City Council District 14* Seth Dellinger, City Council District 10	Seattle	Chris Hoeppner, Mayor* Cecelia Moriarity, King County Executive David Rosenfeld, City Council, Position 2
Miami	Omari Musa, Mayor** Eric Simpson, City Commissioner District 5**	St. Paul, Minnesota	Jacob Perasso, Mayor* Rebecca Williamson, School Board*

***On ballot**
****submitting filing fee for ballot status**
All remaining candidates have write-in status

Outrage after hurricane

Continued from front page

to the social disaster that has ensued since Hurricane Katrina.

Military convoys snaked through the city, filling the highways along with National Guard troops and city and state cops. Helicopters hummed overhead.

Ten minutes into the city limits, just off Magazine Street, with police and army vehicles passing regularly, we met a group of residents who said they had yet to receive food or water from any officials or aid agencies.

"We have been here for seven days," Cleveland Frenell Jr. said. "I got a cut on my hand. I can't get any medical help. Yesterday was the first day we got anything. What we got was water and toilet paper, and it was not even from the government. It was from some individual. Everybody talks about what they are going to do, and nobody has done anything." Asked what the military and police do, Frenell shouted, "Nothing! They do nothing! They ride around."

Frenell and his neighbors had cooked beans and sausage they obtained shortly after the storm, when residents opened some local stores to allow people to get food. They shared their meal, and we gave them some water, an item in short supply.

'Cops pulled guns on us'

"Two days ago the cops pulled guns on us," said another member of the group, Joseph Webber, 61, a self-employed handyman. "We were riding a bicycle back from the Convention Center where we had gotten water. They demanded to know where we lived, to see our IDs, what we were doing. They could see I had the water on top of the bicycle." The group stays together during the day and doesn't venture out at night.

"The governor gave the police strict orders that give them the right to use any kinds of means," Webber said. "They could shoot you and say whatever they want. The police treat you like nothing. That's why we stick together."

On September 6 the mayor of New Orleans announced a mandatory evacuation order for all remaining residents. An estimated 10,000 people are to be moved out, forcibly if necessary, according to city officials.

In an area with condominiums that fared well, we spoke with Robert LeBlanc, the manager of the Park VII complex. "Now they're in here like buzzards," he said, referring to the troops. "But it's too late. They preached, 'Be prepared, know where you're going, what you're going to do'—but *they* weren't prepared."

It's not the hurricane "that got me pissed, it's the way the government acted," LeBlanc said. There was no serious effort to evacuate or help people in the aftermath. He described a body left laying near Magazine and Jackson Streets. Someone finally built a brick barrier around it after a few days. It was still there as we drove by, though now guarded by a soldier. "It could've been one of us," LeBlanc said.

Riding into the city, we had joined residents of Jefferson Parish in a line of cars waiting to be allowed back into the area to visit their homes and gather needed items. Residents were instructed to be out of the city by the 6:00 p.m. curfew enforced by the cops. Nicole Flowers, a 34-year-old restaurant and retail worker, led us to her neighborhood of Harvey.

"People get displaced from their families," Flowers said. "There is no effort whatsoever made to keep families together. They give you no information about where to go to get help, cash checks, or get food and supplies. Or, if they do tell you where to go to get assistance, you get there and they don't know anything about it."

Bernard Johnson, 45, a catering worker, stayed in his nearby apartment complex through the hurricane. He is not sure where his family is or whether they are together. "I've been sleeping outside," Johnson said. "We can't live inside because the roof caved in and the carpet and furniture are wet." He hadn't seen any buses come through the area to pick people up.

When residents asked for help, he said, cops on patrol just gave them the number of the parish president's emergency line. Many have no working phones, and whenever they borrow someone's cell phone they get a busy signal.

"My main concern is that we need ice," said Hazel Thomas, 32. A friend "has seizures and if she gets overheated she needs ice, and all we have is warm bottles of water."

Like many other working people here, Thomas has taken initiatives—sometimes dangerous ones—to save others, such as moving two elderly women to a safer building when their roof caved in during the hurricane. "There's over 100 people here who need to get out," said Thomas.

The Red Cross came by on September 4 and gave out boxes with 12 army-issued MRE food packets and some water. "They said they'd come back to pick people up today," Thomas said, "but we haven't seen them."

What millions of people in the region are now facing is the battle to get jobs, decent housing, health care, and basic necessities from clothing to furniture. Based on recent experience, many working people here are recognizing that will take a fight.



Militant/Laura Garza

Residents in the 12th ward of New Orleans tell *Militant* reporter Brian Taylor (far right) September 5 that they have waited for seven days to be evacuated. Cleveland Frenell Jr. (left), with cut hand wrapped in tissue paper, has not received medical attention.



Militant/Brian Taylor

Bernard Johnson (left) and Hazel Thomas (far right) still wait in their destroyed home September 5 to evacuate New Orleans.

'We had to organize to get what we needed'

BY SAM MANUEL

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana—"More people were separated from their families by the rescue operation than by the flood waters," said Debra Posey, a New Orleans resident now sheltered at a Days Inn hotel here along with 30 other families.

Posey worked as a cook in the New Orleans school system before she and hundreds of thousands were evacuated in face of the flooding after Hurricane Katrina hit that city.

Thousands of working people perished due to what many consider the callous indifference of the federal, state, and local governments. Tens of thousands were displaced to sports arenas, National Guard armories, hotels, and shelters in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Government officials deployed thousands of regular and National Guard troops to the region. Army troops along with state and city cops cracked down on working people desperate for food, water, and basic necessities—describing them as "looters" and criminals.

Working people were left to fend for themselves. Posey was one of many in cities across the region who told *Militant* reporters how they were on their own to cope with the hurricane, how days passed before they received their first bottle of water, and how many lives were saved by the initiatives of working people themselves.

Posey called the evacuation order a "farce." She said, "It was too late. They know we are people who live from hand to mouth. We had no vehicles or other ways to leave the city."

Three days passed before she, her granddaughter, and her nephew were evacuated. The waters forced Posey and neighbors to the top floor of a three-story building. No rescue boats came for them.

"My nephew used a neighbor's water ski and a canoe to ferry people out two at a time," Posey explained. She said she was angered at the sight of school buses abandoned and under water that could have been used to evacuate people.

"When we made it to Interstate 10, I thought we were rescued and it was over," Posey said. "But it started all over again. We were just there in the sun with no water or food. Some people had already been there two nights." A helicopter finally arrived and began taking people away in groups of 10. "We just landed in another spot where we waited again without food or water," she said. When the buses finally arrived, people were hurried on them, often separating family members and taking them to different locations.

To deflect growing outrage at state and federal officials, both Democrats and Republicans have jousted in the media attempting to lay blame on

Continued on page 7



Militant/Sam Manuel

Michelle Daniels stands among ruined homes near Long Beach, Mississippi, September 5. Daniels points in the direction of her home in Pass Christian where she was denied entry by the state police and National Guard troops.

Mississippi farmers hit by crisis after hurricane

BY SUSAN LAMONT

HATTIESBURG, Mississippi—"From Jackson to Gulfport, there is devastation for farmers from the hurricane—crops destroyed or damaged, power out, phones out, homes wiped out, trees downed. For many farmers, there's not much left of the crops that were in the fields," said Ben Burkett, 54, in a September 4 telephone interview from his office at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC). He was describing the impact of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath on small farmers in southern Mississippi.

"We've lost the crops we had, and we can't do planting for the fall, which we usually would have been doing right around now," said Burkett, who has been farming for 32 years and grows vegetables on his farm near this small southeastern Mississippi city. Burkett is also Mississippi state coordinator for the FSC, which assists Black farmers in the Southeast in the fight to keep their land and market their crops.

"The vast majority of our members don't have insurance, even for their houses. We are going to try to contact FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] tomorrow to help our members apply for federal assistance," Burkett said. "I was told by one FEMA representative that the application is 'on the web.' But many of the farmers here still don't have electricity, and others don't have computers."

Burkett said he spoke with one chicken farmer from nearby Mt. Olive who was spending $100 a day on diesel fuel for generators to cool three buildings, each housing 12,000 chickens. The price of fuel has jumped from $1.95 a gallon in August, to over $3 a gallon, he said. The farmer has a contract with a Tyson chicken processing plant, and is fighting to keep his chickens cool enough so they won't die.

There is an acute fuel shortage in Mississippi right now. Many gas stations are closed, others are operating for reduced hours. Many farmers are spending hours each day trying to find diesel fuel to power generators. The situation will grow worse as farmers prepare to bring in their harvests.

Of the 14 poultry processing plants in Mississippi, ten have been shut since the hurricane, throwing thousands out of work. At the James Street apartments in Hattiesburg, *Militant* reporters spoke September 4 with workers from the nearby Marshall Durbin chicken plant, which has been closed since the storm. Many are from Mexico, and had to survive the storm with little or no information about what to do or where to seek help. None of the advisories or public service announcements are in Spanish. "I don't know when we will go back to work because the bosses have told us nothing," said Katalina Hernandez, who has worked in the plant for three years.

In addition to the farmers impacted directly by the hurricane, the flow of agricultural shipments from the Midwest that normally travel down the Mississippi River and out of Gulf ports has been disrupted. Half of all U.S. grain exports are shipped through this route. Corn, soybeans, sugar cane, and cotton are among the commodities shipped through the Gulf.

Ports and waterways from Texas to Florida, closed by the hurricane and flooding, have now been opened for limited tug and barge traffic to aid in the cleanup.

Even farmers further north in Mississippi were affected by the hurricane. "Farmers around here lost some of their corn crop due to wind damage," said Roy Brown, 47, from the Mileston Co-op near Tchula, about an hour north of Jackson. "I think there should be a moratorium on all farm foreclosures," said Burkett, "not just in the disaster areas, but for the farmers all over the country, and we need to demand more federal assistance directed to agricultural producers."



Militant

Lisa Potash, SWP candidate for Atlanta city council president, speaks with workers housed at Mississippi State Fairgrounds in Jackson after Hurricane Katrina.

Workers warehoused at Houston Astrodome speak out

BY JOSÉ ARAVENA AND ANTHONY DUTROW

HOUSTON—Texas governor Richard Perry hung out the 'No Vacancy' sign September 4, claiming the state had reached its capacity in housing some 240,000 working people from the New Orleans area who fled or were evacuated here in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

These reporters were able to talk with workers and their families, gathered at corners or under the small shade trees that surround the Houston Reliant Stadium, Reliant Center, and Astrodome complex.

Most had been penned up in the New Orleans Superdome for days before being bussed into the Houston stadium complex. All were wearing neon pink bracelets that allow them to re-enter the center.

Tony Riley, her husband Raymond, and daughter Candy, spoke about their five days in the Superdome. "The soldiers searched me and took my son's schizophrenia medicine," Tony said, "and I never got it back. They finally got to us with food and water but they would just go to an area of the dome open up a box of MREs (Army-issued food packets) and throw it down in front of us like we were dogs."

Raymond said he could not get over the backed-up sewage system and the constant, overwhelming stench of human feces. "That was the most humiliating experience of my life."

Candy, 25, who worked at a Wal-Mart store in New Orleans, expressed her anger at the mayor and other officials in charge. "They could have put us on the barges and the big cruise ships on the river before the hurricane and floods hit and gotten us out of there," she said.

Many of those *Militant* reporters talked to were eager to expose the treatment they received at the hands of police and other government personnel. "I don't have any idea what I'm going to do now," Dorothy Milton, a 35-year-old single mother, said. She arrived here September 1 with her brother, sister, and four children. She described wading through neck-deep water until they got to the dome in New Orleans where, "We were treated like animals, I felt like Rodney King after that." Milton added, "Now it's like we're homeless."

Margaret Gordon, who worked at a retirement home in New Orleans, explained she was picked up in the projects where she lived with her daughter. "The police treated us so bad," she said, "they threatened to leave us there under the overpass, they were pushing us around." Like so many other parents, Gordon is separated from her child. "I still don't know were she is," she said.

Jerome Barra, a restaurant worker, described how he left his apartment and made it on his own to the Superdome. "We were there for four days before we were evacuated. It was terrible," he told the *Militant*. "There was a lack of medical attention, and people didn't get properly fed. There were no lights and no water. The bathrooms were getting backed up. And there were dead bodies everywhere."

Barra gave a picture of the cooperation among people rarely mentioned in press reports. "We were all helping each other out," he said, "bringing the elderly people to the front, holding people, getting them medical attention—we were doing all that." On the other hand he described National Guard members with M16 rifles, fingers on the trigger. "They did not have to be over us like we were enemies when we were only looking for help."

While most who have been bussed into Houston are from the largely Black working-class neighborhoods of New Orleans, many Latino workers were also trapped there. A first wave of 500 arrived, including Honduran workers who had fled to New Orleans when Hurricane Mitch devastated their country in 1998.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

September 26, 1980

A week after Félix García Rodríguez, a member of the Cuban delegation to the United Nations, was assassinated on a busy New York City street, police have made no arrests.

A caller told United Press International several minutes after the shooting: "Omega 7 commandos are responsible for the execution of a Cuban delegate to the UN…. We intend to continue to eliminate all these traitors from the face of the earth and we are going to continue on executing all these people who are responsible for conditions in Cuba."

On Friday afternoon, the day after the murder of García, 500 people demonstrated outside the United States Mission to the UN.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

September 26, 1955

SEPT. 22—The Peron dictatorship in Argentina ended on Sept. 19. His overthrow has been widely advertised as a "revolution" by the U.S. press. In reality, power was transferred behind a screen of mere military maneuvering.

Two weeks ago, when the new coup was impending, the leaders of the unions asked that the workers be armed and organized as a militia. Why didn't Peron heed this request?

The answer contains no deep mystery. Peron dominated the labor movement but was himself the representative of the capitalist class. He maneuvered with the labor movement using it as a battering ram against imperialism in order to promote the wealth of native capitalism.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

October 1, 1930

President Hoover has given his reply to the needs of the unemployed workers in his speech, at the bankers' convention in Cleveland. With a characteristic genius for insight, he disclosed the fact that what was wrong with many people was…the reduction of their incomes. And how had their incomes been reduced. The answer of the Great Engineer is: "The income of a large part of our people is not reduced by the depression but it is affected by unnecessary fears and pessimism . . ."

Misery is spreading among the workers and farmers of the country like a prairie fire. An intensive wage cutting campaign is being conducted through the land, actively instigated by business men and bankers, passively accepted by the capitalistic labor leaders.

UMWA, Co-Op miners press for dismissal of harassment suit

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY – Attorneys for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 17 individual workers involved in a union-organizing drive at the Co-Op coal mine, and the Utah State AFL-CIO submitted court papers September 1 asking federal judge Dee Benson to "put an end to the vexatious litigation" filed by C.W. Mining Company.

The coal bosses went to court in September 2004, charging the UMWA, Co-Op miners, and their supporters in the labor movement, as well as newspapers that have written about the miners' fight for a union, with charges ranging from unfair labor practices to defamation and conspiracy.



Militant/Mark Downs

Co-Op miners picket in June 2005 at mine in Huntington, Utah, where they have been in a two-year fight for union representation by the United Mine Workers of America.

At a June hearing on motions to dismiss the case filed on behalf of the *Militant* and Salt Lake City's two main daily papers, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Deseret Morning News*, the judge ordered lawyers for C.W. Mining and its company-allied International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU) to rewrite their complaint. He described the lawsuit as "amorphous" and said the defendants needed to know who was being sued, for what, and by whom.

In the briefs they presented, attorneys for the UMWA and the miners explained that the charges of unfair labor practices are an attempt to circumvent proceedings of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The firings of UMWA supporters at the Co-Op mine and the resolution of a union representation election held in December 2004 are now before the NLRB. "It is well-settled, black letter law that Plaintiffs cannot pursue their unfair labor practice claim because the National Labor Relations Act preempts it," the UMWA noted in its brief.

Defamation claims still vague

The two Salt Lake dailies and the *Militant* have already filed new motions to dismiss the charges of defamation against them in the C.W. Mining lawsuit. The UMWA, Co-Op miners, and AFL-CIO briefs "incorporate and adopt herein the arguments… by the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News*," and "further rely on the arguments advanced by the *Militant* in its motion to dismiss" in putting forward their cases for dismissal of this charge.

"At this court's June 14 hearing on the three newspaper Defendants' motions to dismiss, [C.W. Mining and the IAUWU] were permitted to amend their complaint a second time to cure numerous deficiencies …," says the UMWA filing.

"Especially with regard to the defamation claims, the Second Amended Complaint remains vague and rambling, and still fails to articulate how the alleged defamatory statements were false and how they injured Plaintiffs."

The union lawyers point out there are numerous legal precedents that protect "freewheeling use of the written and spoken word" and "uninhibited, robust and wide open debate" in labor disputes. "Under the well-established free-speech principles protecting language used during labor disputes, Plaintiffs simply cannot demonstrate that the statements at issue were defamatory."

C.W. Mining attorneys "allege defamation by almost anyone for any comments that they made during the labor dispute that [the coal company] viewed as contrary to their interests. This shotgun approach does not sufficiently allege a viable defamation claim," says the brief filed on behalf of the miners.

A further example of the company's failure to present a case proving defamation in its rewritten lawsuit is provided in papers filed on behalf of Ed Mayne, president of the Utah AFL-CIO. C.W. Mining quotes from a Dec. 28, 2004, article in the *Militant* that it claims is defamatory, "Ed Mayne faxed a letter to [Co-Op mine manager] Charles Reynolds, saying, 'It has been brought to my attention that just days before a scheduled union election, you have terminated and are threatening mass firings of Co-Op miners. These actions by C.W. Mining are a direct violation of the July 1, 2004 National Labor Relations Board settlement.'" The AFL-CIO attorney pointed out that the company "adds nothing to illuminate what part of the statement is false, malicious, damaging and/or defamatory. It is clearly opinion, not defamatory, protected under federal law…."

Challenge to immigration charges

A new charge was added in the second amended complaint accusing individual Co-Op miners of fraud for allegedly securing work at the mine without proper work papers. The UMWA's attorneys replied that the company has no standing to charge the workers with immigration violations, since those laws are monitored and enforced by the federal government, not private citizens or businesses.

In addition, the union noted, the company is supposed to demonstrate they have been damaged as a result of the workers gaining employment at the mine, but have utterly failed to do so. "Even as alleged, C.W. Mining clearly received the benefit of these workers' labor before discharging them for inadequate documentation," says the UMWA brief. "Moreover, the NLRB has already indicated it has found merit to the UMWA's claim that the discharges were in violation of the National Labor Relations Act."

The union brief pointed out that the labor board is now trying to reach a settlement between the company and the union, based on its findings that the firing of some 30 miners one week before the union election for failing to provide additional work documents was illegal.

Court and attorneys fees

Because of the retaliatory nature of the C.W. Mining lawsuit, each of the defendants is asking the judge to grant them attorneys fees and cover their court costs. The UMWA says the company filed this broad and sweeping lawsuit with few facts or legal precedents to back up their claim. In particular, "Filing and serving the lawsuit on fifteen or so of the most outspoken leaders among the C.W. Mining's low-wage workforce—not to mention members of a bargaining unit Plaintiff IAUWU is supposed to be representing—represents nothing more than hard-ball tactics intended to chill their free speech, not to mention their rights under federal labor law."

At the same time, attorneys for the UMWA, individual Co-Op miners, and the Utah State AFL-CIO were filing their objections to the C.W. Mining lawsuit, company lawyers were asking the court for an extension of 30 more days to answer the recently filed briefs by the newspapers. C.W. Mining has already had 15 days to answer the newspapers.

A second hearing on the lawsuit has not been set yet. That will now depend on how the judge rules on the coal company's request for more time.

UK airport workers fight to defend union



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

LONDON—Sacked members of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) maintain their picket line and protest against airline catering company Gate Gourmet at Heathrow airport. The company fired 800 workers August 10 when some walked off the job to hold a union meeting. British Airways workers responded with a one-day sympathy strike. Since then, the TGWU and the company reached an agreement offering the fired workers voluntary redundancy (layoff) and compensation pay.

Meanwhile, union-busting Gate Gourmet boss David Siegel continues his threat to dismiss "hard-line militants."

The TGWU is booking coaches for the catering workers to attend the annual Trades Union Congress conference in Brighton September 12. Union stewards recently traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland, to receive a solidarity donation.

—BY CELIA PUGH

Cuba offers 1,500 doctors to aid victims of hurricane in U.S.



Adalberto Roque/AFP/Getty Images

Members of Cuban medical brigade, ready for duty with backpacks, hear speech by President Fidel Castro in Havana September 4 on Cuban offer of aid to U.S. hurricane victims.

BY RÓGER CALERO

Cuba's revolutionary government has offered to dispatch more than 1,500 doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel to New Orleans and the broader region to provide urgently needed first aid and health care to thousands of working people who have been left stranded in the hurricane-impacted areas (see front page for statement by Cuban government).

The medical brigade is prepared to be sent immediately along with 36 tons of medical supplies. The group is made up largely of seasoned doctors with previous experience volunteering to provide medical services in countries throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia, often in remote areas under harsh conditions. The volunteers also have a working knowledge of English.

The Cuban government first issued its offer August 30, the day after hurricane Katrina hit the coast of Louisiana. It offered a brigade of 1,100 doctors carrying 26.4 tons of medical supplies.

On September 4, with no public acknowledgement of the offer by the U.S. government, Cuban president Fidel Castro reiterated it. He reported that a total of 1,586 doctors carrying 36 tons of supplies was now ready to be mobilized at a moment's notice to the hurricane-devastated areas.

"We have done all the necessary estimates. Within one hour and 50 minutes, one of our planes could be landing at the international airport closest to the site of the tragedy," said the Cuban president on the September 2 nationally broadcast Roundtable television program.

A day earlier, U.S. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack omitted Cuba from the list of governments that have offered aid. While the Cuban offer has been reported in the Latin American media, it has received almost no coverage in the U.S. press.

"We will wait patiently [for the White House's response] for as long as it takes," said Castro at a September 4 gathering in Havana of the 1,586 members of the medical brigade, who reported for duty with their backpacks and white coats.

While awaiting the White House's response, members of the medical brigade have spent the time brushing up on their English and taking part in intensive workshops on epidemiology.

Long record of internationalist aid

The response by the government and working people of Cuba to the social disaster in New Orleans is not unique. It is consistent with revolutionary Cuba's longstanding record of internationalist solidarity.

Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and nurses are currently volunteering in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Nearly 26,000 Cuban health-care professionals are serving in 66 countries, Castro reported.

Medical teams from Cuba operated clinics in Indonesia and Sri Lanka after a deadly tsunami rolled across the Indian Ocean region in December 2004, taking hundreds of thousands of lives.

In 1998 after Hurricane Mitch struck Central America, Cuba sent 121 doctors to Honduras and a similar number to Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

That year the Cuban government took the initiative to create the Latin American School of Medicine to train thousands of youth from Central America and the rest of the continent to improve longer-term medical care in those countries. Today there are over 12,000 youths from 83 countries studying medicine there. The school recently graduated its first class of 1,610 students.

Cuba also stands out for its record in responding to natural disasters. Because of the level of organization and political consciousness among working people and youth, as well as the priority the government gives to the needs of the majority, Cuba has been able to prepare in advance of hurricanes with results unequalled by any other country.

An effective system of popular mobilization and education to prepare the population for hurricanes involves the neighborhood-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, trade unions and other mass organizations. This has made it possible to carry out large-scale evacuations before hurricanes, minimizing the loss of lives.

In September 2004, in preparation for Hurricane Ivan, some 1.9 million people were evacuated to safety. Three out of four were housed with families. The rest were accommodated in 2,500 shelters; all had access to doctors, nurses, food, and medical supplies. In addition, some 1,700 kitchens for feeding both refugees and volunteers were set up across the country, with more than 6,000 culinary workers mobilized in Havana alone.

No one in Cuba died as a result of Hurricane Ivan. In the rest of the Caribbean, 70 people perished in the storm, and at least 50 more storm-related deaths were reported in the United States.

The previous month, Hurricane Charley struck Havana and then cut through Florida. Four people died in Cuba, while 25 lost their lives in Florida.

After each of these storms, hundreds of thousands of people have been mobilized to clean up and rebuild homes with national government financing. Government aid has been prioritized for the neediest, minimizing any disparity in access to resources according to who has money.

Cuba's offer

Continued from front page

two or more, depending on the circumstances, for as long as necessary.

Likewise, Cuba is ready to send via Houston, or any other airport that is specified, 500 additional specialists in Comprehensive General Medicine, with the same equipment, who could be at their destination point by noon or by the afternoon of tomorrow, Saturday, September 3.

A third group of 500 specialists in Comprehensive General Medicine could be arriving on the morning of Sunday, September 4. Thus, some 1,100 such doctors, with the resources described, which amount to 26.4 tons of medicine and diagnostic equipment, would be lending their services to the neediest people in the wake of the damage caused by hurricane Katrina.

This medical personnel has the necessary international experience and elementary knowledge of the English language that would allow them to treat the patients.

We stand ready awaiting the response of the U.S. authorities.

'We had to organize to get what we needed'

Continued from page 4

each other.

Referring to a quick visit to the area by President George Bush, Lance Ronsonette, a firefighter who lives in Biloxi, Mississippi, said, "I wanted to ask him, what did you bring us? food? water? Bush said he came to find out our condition! The whole world knows our condition! We need help!" Bush spoke briefly in a lot next to what was left of Ronsonette's home that is used by the Salvation Army as a food distribution station.

In the coastal town of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, Regina Barbour stood in front of what had been her home for 53 years. It was completely destroyed by the storm surge waters. "I called FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and they said they would send me some forms in the mail!" she said.

Devastation in Biloxi

The *Militant* spoke with several workers while in Biloxi, a city wiped out by the hurricane. Arnold Blackstone, 44, worked as a cleaner for a decontamination company. Timothy Harris, 28, worked for a moving company. And Fitzroy Chambers, 32, worked at the Casino Magic. They and their family members are among the more than 300 people staying at Biloxi Junior High School, now a make-shift shelter. They sleep in the hallways on whatever they have salvaged. There are no cots or mattresses. Classroom doors were locked.

"No preparations were made for us," said Blackstone angrily. He swam for hours in water filled with debris and dead bodies. Chambers told how he, his wife, and son took refuge in their attic for 14 hours before the water receded. "I called 911 asking for help to rescue us but they said they couldn't do anything," he said.

"After three days in this shelter, we just received our first supplies of ice and water," said Harris. There is no electricity, he added. The toilets are overrun with excrement because there is no running water to flush them. No doctors have visited the shelter even though there are several diabetics there.

The anger of these workers was heightened by the fact that Keesler Air Force base sits just across the street and has had electricity, air conditioning, and plenty of food and water. "They have more than enough empty rooms for us," said Harris. "I know because I just helped to move things out of them."

In the town of Pass Christian, Mississippi, Michelle and Anthony Daniels along with 75 of their neighbors established a makeshift shelter at Burt Jenkins High School by breaking into the school gym.

Michelle Daniels was angered by the indifference of the local cops. "Ice and water were under lock and key at the police station," she said. "The cops sat outside in their air-conditioned cars and had hot meals brought to them. We got nothing."

"The people in that shelter were pulling together. We had to organize to get what we needed," she said.

John Benson from Birmingham, Alabama, contributed to this article.

The working class and the materialist view of history

Below is an excerpt from The Origins of Materialism: The evolution of a scientific view of the world, *one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for September. This book deals with the first steps in the development of the materialist conception of the world. Author George Novack traces the history of materialism from its origin 2,500 years ago in the bustling cities of ancient Greece, and explains why materialism remains today a bulwark against obscurantism and reaction of all kinds. Copyright © 1965 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BOOKS OF THE MONTH



Minnesota Historical Society

Demonstration of unemployed called by Teamsters Local 574 Federal Workers Section in 1935. The march was tear-gassed by cops. A scientific, materialist view of society explains origin of class society and irreconcilable interests of workers and bosses.

BY GEORGE NOVACK

Every philosophy has dealt with two questions: what does reality consist of and how does it originate? And, after the earliest Greeks, every philosopher has had to answer the further question: how is reality known? The answers given to these fundamental questions have determined the nature of the philosophy and the position of the philosopher.

Almost from the beginning of philosophy there have been two principal viewpoints on these problems: the materialist and the idealist. In his pioneering *History of Philosophy* Hegel declared that "throughout all time there has only been one Philosophy, the contemporary differences of which constitute the necessary aspects of the one principal." To be sure, in distinction from other forms of intellectual activity the function of philosophizing has maintained certain common features which give it continuity from the Greeks to the present day. But this process of generalizing thought has been at bottom a unity of divergent, and ultimately opposing, ways of rationally explaining the universe. The materialist method stands at one pole; the idealist at the other.

What are the essential principles of materialism which mark it off from all other tendencies in philosophy? What are its distinctive features which enable us to recognize a materialist thinker and to classify a person as reasoning along materialist lines? Let us list them in a very summary manner.

1. The basic proposition of materialism refers to the nature of reality, regardless of the existence of mankind. It states that matter is the primordial substance, the essence, of reality. Everything comes from matter and its movements and is based upon matter. This thought is expressed in the phrase: "Mother Nature." This signifies in materialist terms that nature is the ultimate source of everything in the universe from the galactic systems to the most intimate feelings and boldest thoughts of *homo sapiens.*

2. The second aspect of materialism covers the relations between matter and mind. According to materialism, matter produces mind and mind never exists apart from matter. Mind is the highest product of material development and animal organization and the most complex form of human activity.

3. This means that nature exists independently of mind but that no mind can exist apart from matter. The material world existed long before mankind or any thinking being came into existence. As Feuerbach said: "The true relation of thought to Being is this; Being is subject, thought is predicate. Thought springs from Being, but Being does not spring from thought."

4. This precludes the existence of any God, gods, spirits, souls or other immaterial entities which are alleged to direct or influence the operations of nature, society and the inner man.

These are the elementary principles of the materialist outlook. By these signs shall you know a materialist or conversely, a non- materialist, whether or not that person knows what kind of thinker he really is.

What the materialist principles signify can be further clarified by contrasting them with a quite different way of interpreting the world: the idealist philosophy. One of the dialectical modes of explanation is to show how a thing is related to its own opposite. For example, to understand what a female is also involves knowing what makes a male and how he functions in the cycle of reproduction. If we want to find out what a capitalist is, we have to know the makeup and development of the wage-worker as well. Only then can we comprehend the essential nature of the capitalist system which is based upon the relations between these two interdependent yet antagonistic social classes.

The philosophical opposite of materialism is idealism. These two modes of thought reciprocally define and limit each other in the province of philosophy.

It should be noted that the basic propositions of these two types of thought are absolutely opposed to each other. One must be right and the other wrong. Both cannot be correct. Whoever maintains consistently the position of the one is inescapably led to conclusions exactly contrary to the other.

Materialism and idealism are the two main tendencies, lines, camps in the field of philosophy, just as the capitalist and working classes are the two principal and decisive social forces in contemporary society.

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— Socialist Workers Campaign Statement —

Gulf social disaster: bosses' parties at fault, workers need own party

Continued from front page

very survival.

While the rich and the middle-class professionals, including many direly needed doctors, got out of New Orleans, along with anyone else able to leave on their own, tens of thousands of workers and their families were left behind, the large majority of them Black. No effort was made by government at any level to press into service every plane, bus, train, and automobile at hand to get those least able to evacuate out of harm's way. As a result thousands of working people were killed by the indifference of those whose wealth is based on exploiting our labor.

Many other workers in New Orleans (and across the Gulf Coast) were left to fend for themselves without medical attention, food, or water. Cops and government troops were deployed in working-class neighborhoods with orders to stop people from obtaining needed supplies to stem mounting starvation, dehydration, and spreading disease. Tens of thousands, suddenly homeless and having lost their personal possessions, were herded—still with nothing to eat, still with nothing to drink, and still with no medical care—into unequipped and soon squalid facilities such as the Superdome and convention center.

The rapid explosion of this social calamity brought to the fore once again the factionalism already marking U.S. bourgeois politics, as capitalism enters the opening stages of accelerated worldwide economic and financial crises, social breakdowns, and spreading wars. As the deaths and devastation came into sharper relief for the world to see, the demagogy of Democratic and Republican politicians became increasingly shrill. They ratcheted up what they themselves dub the "blame game," with demands that "heads roll" and sanctimonious calls for "impartial" investigations. In doing so, what the employing class presents as politics appears more and more baldly as an expression of the dog-eat-dog values, "look out for number one" individualism, and pressures undermining human solidarity central to the very ways capitalism works—from the job market and factory floor, to every aspect of social life.

Confronting the horrors of recent days, working people have done what they can to cope with these emergency conditions and take care of each other. As the bosses' parties and their government have shown themselves unwilling and incapable of meeting even the most elementary necessities to survive, however, the need for the working class to have our own independent organizations—organizations that can speak and act in the interests of the vast majority—has been driven home.

That begins with organizing, using, and extending the trade unions, the elementary defense institutions of the working class. Working people need our own political party, based on a fighting union movement. We need a labor party that organizes, acts, and speaks on behalf of workers and the oppressed, independently of the twin parties of the employing class. A party that represents the interests of an *international class* that has no borders.

Along this road, the working class and unions right now need to demand that Washington and state and local governments deliver massive aid for food, shelter, clothing, and medicine to stricken areas along the Gulf Coast and everywhere workers and their families have been evacuated.

We need to campaign for a massive, federally funded public works program at union-scale wages to rebuild homes, schools, hospitals, and other facilities and infrastructure destroyed by the hurricane and floods.

We need to press for prosecution of cops and government troops responsible for killings and for actions violating the rights of working people.

We need to call for a moratorium on farm foreclosures and massive government aid to farmers whose crops, buildings, equipment, and livelihoods have been ruined.

The resistance by working people and our unions today to employer assaults—from miners in the Western coal fields to striking Northwest airlines workers and Boeing employees, from packinghouse workers in the Midwest to garment workers from Seattle to Miami—point the road forward: to rely on our collective power and solidarity.

In Cuba, a country with far fewer economic resources than the United States and where workers and farmers conquered political power nearly half a century ago, hurricanes hit ferociously and touch a much bigger percentage of the country every time they land. With a mobilized and politically conscious working class, however, the revolutionary government in Cuba has organized to confront these deadly forces of nature with minimal loss of life. Unlike in the United States, the first priority of the Cuban government is to protect the life and health of the population.

What's more, Cuba has dispatched thousands of doctors, construction workers, and other volunteers when storms, earthquakes, or other natural disasters have struck countries in the Americas and elsewhere. The offer by Cuba's revolutionary government to send more than 1,500 doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel to New Orleans and the broader region is an example of the internationalist aid that can be extended when society is organized on the basis of human solidarity.

The most effective response by working people in the United States to the disaster across the Gulf Coast is to take the next steps along the road to building the kind of independent political movement that can free us of dependence on the bosses' government and parties, and from handouts by their charities.

No institution on earth can repel the force of a hurricane. But with our own political party based on a fighting union movement, the working class and our allies *can* wage victorious battles against the ruling families whose imperialist world order is responsible for the wars, economic breakdowns, and social calamities that increasingly endanger humanity.

That is what the 34 Socialist Workers Party candidates are campaigning for in 14 local and state elections in 2005. Join us in campaigning for this internationalist, working-class perspective, one we fight for 365 days a year.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

IOWA

Des Moines

Resisting U.S. Rulers' Global Assault on Workers and Farmers. Speaker: Edwin Fruit, Socialist Workers candidate for City Council, At-Large. Sat., Sept. 17. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program 7:30 p.m. *3707 Douglas Ave. (515) 255-1707.*

FLORIDA

Miami

Socialist Workers Campaign Rally. Speakers: Omari Musa, Socialist Workers candidate for Mayor of Miami, and Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers candidate for Miami City Commissioner District 5. Fri., Sept. 16. Reception, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. *8365 NE 2nd Ave. Rm. 206. Tel: (305) 756-4436.*

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

The Social Catastrophe Following Hurricane Katrina. Fri., Sept. 16, 7 p.m. Donation $3. *7 Mason Ave., Otahuhu. Tel: (09) 276-8885.*

SWEDEN

Stockholm

Celebrate the publication of the first edition of "The Changing Face of U.S. Politics" in Swedish and the Opening of a new hall in Stockholm Sat., Sept. 24. Reception 4:00 p.m.; program, 5:00 p.m. *Pathfinder Böcker, Bildhuggarvägen 17, Station Globen.*

Northwest strike

Continued from front page

promptu rally against Northwest near the end of the procession.

Nearly 4,400 mechanics, cleaners, and custodians at Northwest Airlines went on strike August 19 at airports across the United States. The union rejected the company's demands for deep cuts in jobs and wages.

Unions of flight attendants, ground workers, and pilots are all currently involved in negotiations over wages and benefits with the company. The Air Line Pilots Association has agreed to pay cuts under threat that the airline would file for bankruptcy. Now, citing higher fuel costs, Northwest Airlines is saying it may increase the $1.1 billion annually in concessions it is demanding from workers at the airline.

"We support [the strikers] no matter what," said Doug Green, president of UAW Local 174, at the Labor Day event "United we stand, divided we fall." The UAW local provides its parking lot as a staging area for organizing the AMFA picket lines. AMFA Local 5 vice president Dennis Sutton explained his local has received financial and other support from several unions and many individual working people in this area.

Jackie Deal, a flight attendant at Northwest Airlines and a member of Professional Flight Attendants Association (PFAA), is walking the picket line with AMFA workers at Detroit's International Airport. Deal has been reporting to work, but is also supporting the strikers. "If Northwest succeeds, all bosses across the country will try to eliminate good paying union jobs," she said.

In Minnesota, *Militant* reporters were on hand September 1 for a protest of more than 200 mechanics and supporters of AMFA Local 33 picketing three Minneapolis area hotels housing replacement workers. "We disrupted the shift change at Northwest Airlines, and that was our intention," said Ted Ludwig president of Local 33 to the local media.

Ludwig received cheers from protestors when he said this protest and a previous picket line of 100 in front of these same hotels organized jointly by AMFA and Local 3800 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union (AFSCME) were not one-time protests. "We will continue to do this, to disrupt the traffic of scabs to the Minneapolis airport," he said.

At a September 3 solidarity meeting for Northwest strikers in Minneapolis, Ludwig reported that officers and strike coordinators of Local 33 were being served with subpoenas by Northwest for supposed monetary damages related to the protests. Karen Schultz, a staff person for PFAA in Minneapolis, talked about company intimidation tactics against the flight attendants to undercut solidarity with the mechanics and undercut the possibility of another labor action against the airline. Schultz described the ongoing training of thousands of scabs to fill flight attendant positions in the event of a strike.

Fifty Northwest strikers participated in the Harriet Island Labor Day celebration in St. Paul, Minnesota, leafleting and holding signs asking for support.

Marshall Lambie is a member of the Young Socialists and a student at Wayne State University in Detroit.



BY LEA SHERMAN

SAN FRANCISCO–Some 250 supporters of the striking Northwest mechanics rallied at the San Francisco airport on Labor Day, September 5. The majority of the crowd were airport workers, particularly United Airlines mechanics and their families who are in the same AMFA local as the striking workers at Northwest airlines here.

Trent Willis, president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, and JoAnne Kazemi, union representative for the Professional Flight Attendants Association at Northwest addressed the crowd offering their support.

Janice Sisco, a ticket agent at Northwest Airlines and chairperson of the International Association of Machinists Local 1781 Grievance Committee also spoke. The IAM is not on strike at this point. "This is not about IAM or AMFA," Sisco said. "It is about the union movement. Now is not a time to be divided, it is a time for solidarity."